

A comparative analysis of Kerala floods among English newspapers

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Abstract: *Print media has had been a part of everyday lives of the people especially in a country like India. Print media also has been at the forefront of various issues and events. The newspapers played a vital role in bringing several issues to the forefront and serves a variety of purposes such as awareness creation, information dissemination. Kerala is a state that is often credited with high literacy levels. Kerala was ravaged by what was described as the worst floods ever in a century. The current research study explores the coverage given to Kerala floods by the English newspapers. The research study adopts quantitative research approaches in the form of content analysis to meet the objectives of the research study.*

Key Words: *Print media, Newspapers, Coverage, Content analysis, Kerala floods.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

1.1 Origin of Press in India:

The printing press was introduced in India (1556 AD). Newspaper in India is also the outgrowth of the British rule. The first attempt or experiment to start a newspaper in Kolkata was made by William Bolts. James Aguste Hickey an Englishman started the first English Newspaper Bengal Gazette or Calcutta General Advertiser (1780) at Kolkata.

1.2 History of Print media in Kerala:

The history of early Malayalam press and Printing started in Kerala in the 16th century. Credit for opening the first newspaper in Malayalam goes to a Christian missionary group from Germany. Newspapers, magazines, journals and periodicals in Malayalam were also started by missionaries, in most cases for advertising religious activities. Their donation or contribution to the development of Malayalam prose and journalism, has been considerable. The Basel Mission Society (BMS) set up printing presses in Kochi, Kollam, Ambazhakkad, and Vaippikkottu.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

2.1 Disasters and print media reporting:

Dhanashree Giri and Aman Vats (2018) highlighted that print media plays a significant role during disasters as it is one of the most widely used modes of communicating important information to the masses. Media may portray the devastation; others may expose the failures of the system.

2.2 Disaster reporting:

Quarantelli E.L (1990)in his study entitled 'The Mass Media In Disasters In The United States' which summarized 15 years of research on local mass media operations during natural and technological disasters. Disaster preparedness planning among mass media organizations is very limited and generally of poor quality.

2.3 Disasters and information dissemination:

Guion and Borders (2007) that media as well as being one of the most important vehicles for the distribution of information on certain risks and dangers to people, is used extensively during the various stages of a tragedy. Leitch and Bohensky (2014) commented, that the media should also contribute to individual and community preparedness, help identify potential threats, enable communities to tap into local potential and experiences to adapt to crises, disasters and other challenges, as well as provide a forum for community planning on post-disaster reconstruction.

3. METHODOLOGY:

This study engages quantitative research approaches in the form of content analysis. Two newspapers viz. The Hindu, The Times of India, were taken for the study and all the articles pertaining to Kerala floods were analyzed over a period from August 1st 2018 to August 31st 2018.

3.1 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To explore the level of coverage of Kerala floods issue among Malayalam newspapers.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION:

Table 4.1 Articles by Story Type

Newspapers/ Categories	The Hindu	The Times of India
News	325	339
Features	29	38
Editorials	11	16
Others	31	34
Total	396	427

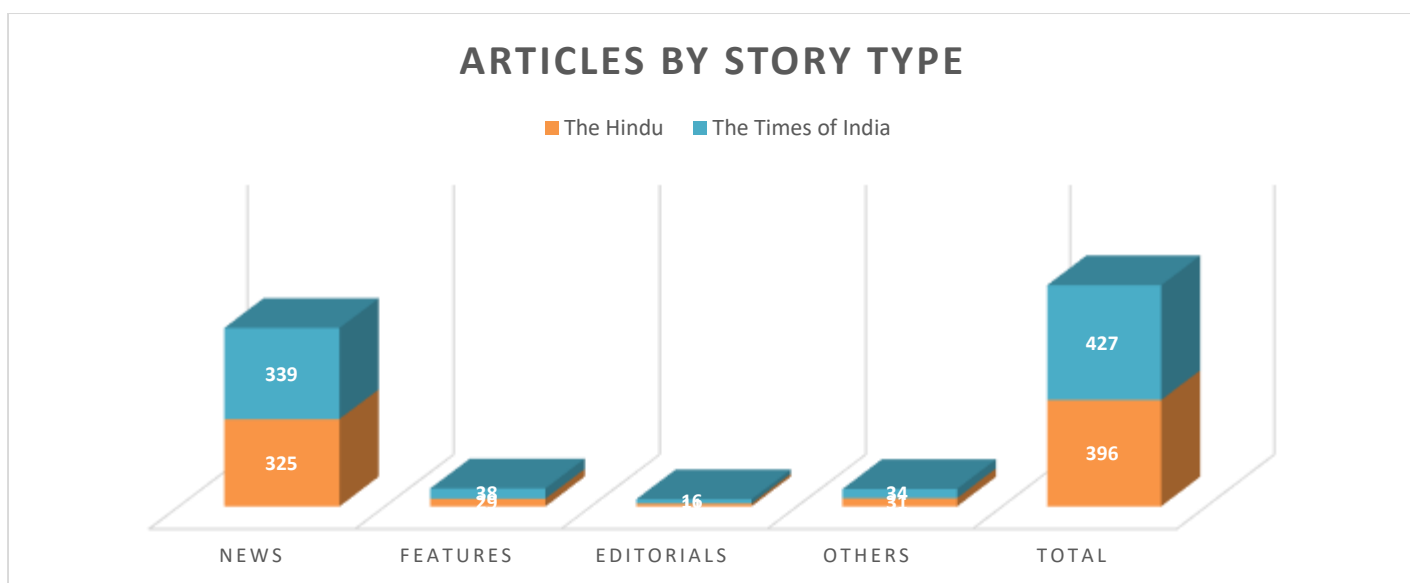


Table 4.2 Number of Images and Articles

Newspapers	Number of Images	Number of Articles
The Hindu	147	396
The Times of India	126	427

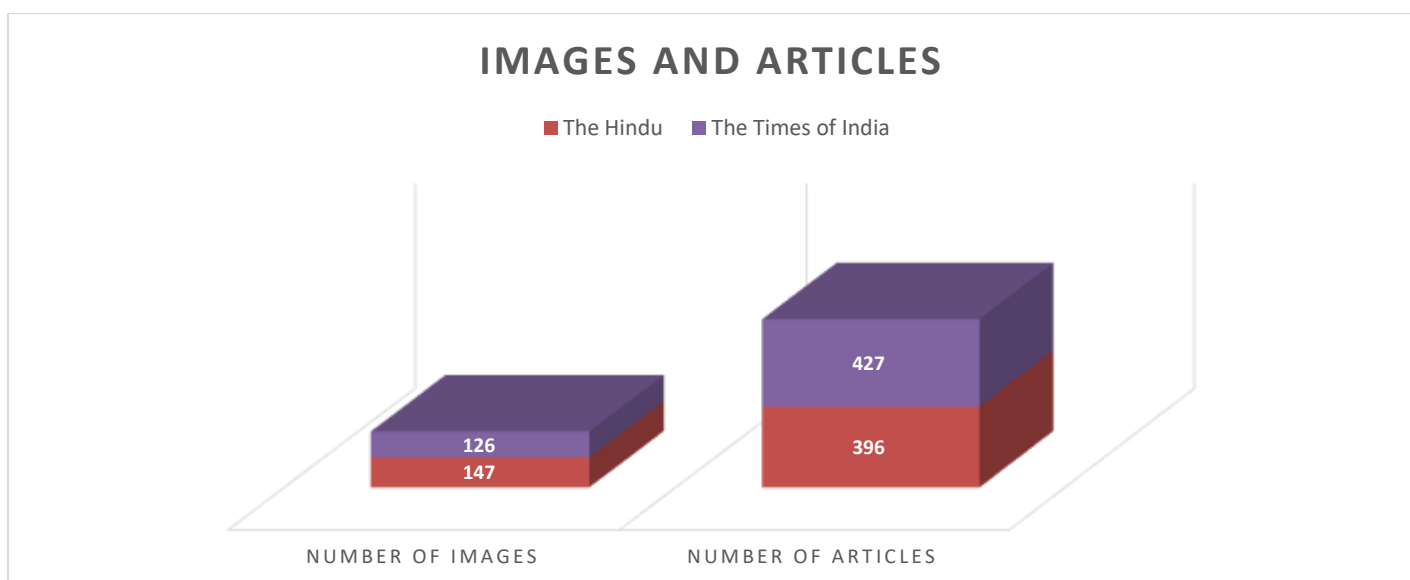


Table 4.3 Length of News Story

Words	The Hindu	The Times of India
>800	47	31
400-799	68	49
150-399	74	69
100-149	116	104
<100	91	68
Total	296	321

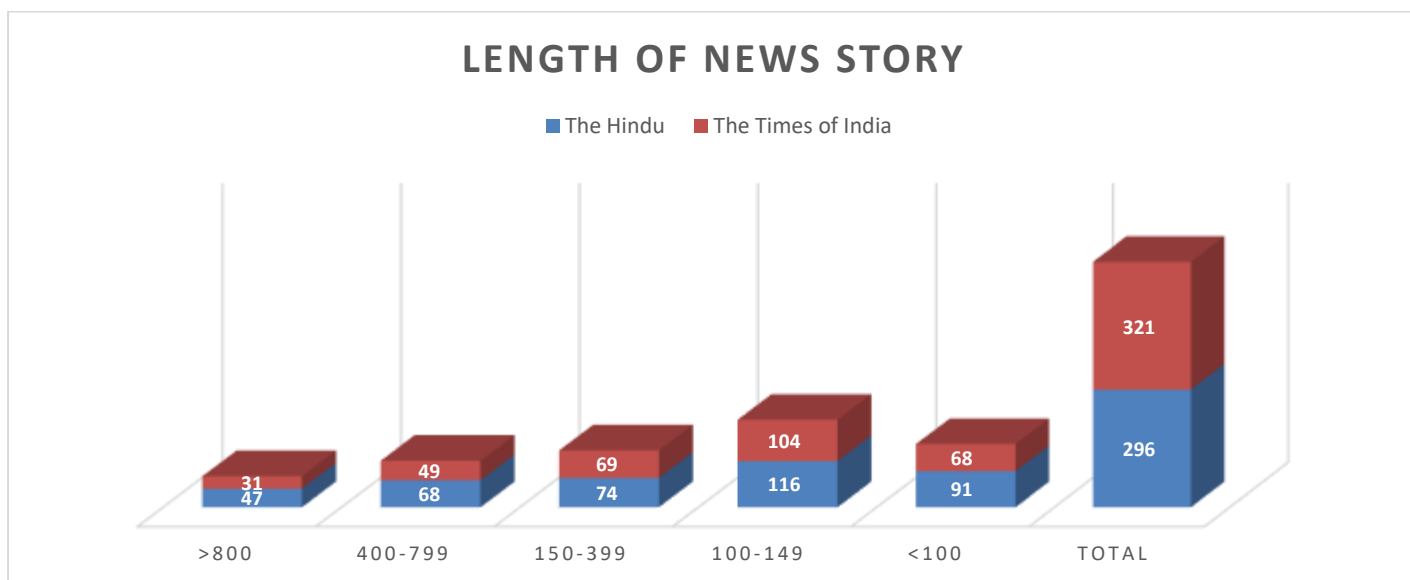


Table 4.4 Span of News Story

Words	The Hindu	The Times of India
One Column	58	49
Two Coloumns	86	94
Three Coloumns	68	87
Four Coloumns	45	56
Multiple Coloumns	39	35
Total	296	321

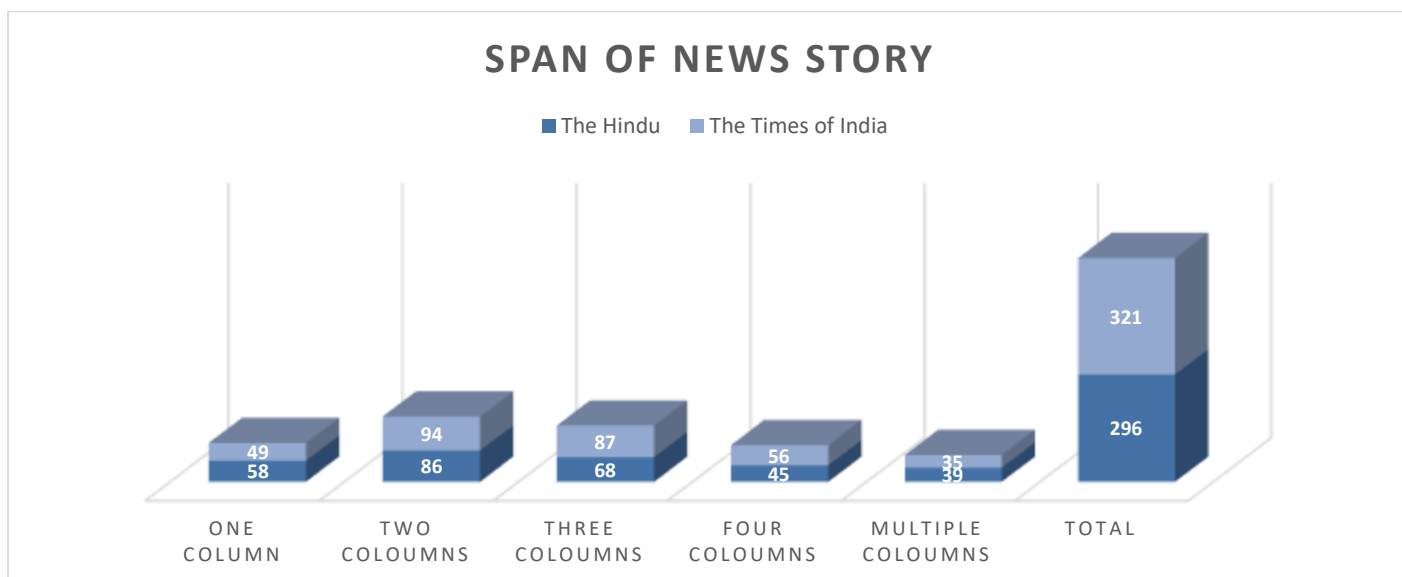


Table 4.4 span of news story

5. FINDINGS:

- With regards to articles by story type, there were more news articles in Times of India (339) than The Hindu (325). There were more features in Times of India (38) than The Hindu (29). There were more editorials in Times of India (16) than The Hindu (11). There were more other news in Times of India (34) than The Hindu (31).
- As regards to number of images and articles, there were more number of images in The Hindu (147) than Times of India (126). There were more number of articles in Times of India (427) than The Hindu (396).
- With regards to length of news story, there were more number of stories which were more than 800 words in length in The Hindu (47) compared to Times of India (31). There were also more number of stories which were 400-799 words in length in The Hindu (68) compared to Times of India (49). There were also more number of stories which were 150-399 words in length in The Hindu (74) compared to Times of India (69). There were also more number of stories which were 100-149 words in length in The Hindu (116) compared to Times of India (104). There were also more number of stories which were less than 100 words in length in The Hindu (91) compared to Times of India (68).
- As regards to span of news story, there were more stories which were one column in length in The Hindu (58) compared to Times of India (49). There were more stories which were two columns in length in Times of India (94) compared to The Hindu (86). There were more stories which were three columns in length in Times of India (87) compared to The Hindu (68). There were more stories which were four columns in length in Times of India (56) compared to The Hindu (45). There were more stories which were multiple columns in length in The Hindu (39) compared to Times of India (35).

6. CONCLUSION:

The primary Objective of the research undertaken had been to know about the coverage and reportage of News given to Kerala Flood 2018. The 2018 Kerala Flood has been the biggest disaster covered and reported by print media. Other than just informing the readers about the dangers and intensity of the floods, the print media exhibited unprecedented maturity and responsibility while reporting the same. The electronic media had an edge over print media due to technology while handling the flood reports but that doesn't make the role of newspapers any less important. They did their best with the limited advantages. The media too was facing an unprecedented scenario for the first time and had no idea how to respond to a situation like this. This was the first major disaster that the state had faced in many years. Yet the print media rose up to the occasion and used their experience and maturity in reporting the news. The print media could make people aware in detail of what had happened and how they can handle it when the newspapers came out the next day. Not just reporting news, the print media also played an important role in leading the rescue operations. They made sure that the information from the authorities were passed on to the people correctly, with a focus on curbing fake news. Instead of reporting on what should have been done or what went wrong, they focused on what can be done to overcome the situation.

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